

Visit APG News online at
www.apgnews.apg.army.mil

DTC celebrates Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month

Story and photo by
HEATHER TASSMER
APG News

Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month was celebrated May 25, with the theme "Freedom for a Nation We Call Our Own" during a U.S. Army Developmental Test Command sponsored-program at the APG Recreational Center.

Judy Matthews, DTC executive officer, served as the

master of ceremonies. Mar Nieto, of the Filipino American Association of Upper Chesapeake, sang the national anthem and Chaplain (Capt.) Yun J. Kim provided a prayer at the beginning and end of the celebration.

Brig. Gen. Michael L. Combest, commander, DTC, in his welcoming remarks, said many pundits lament titles like "Irish-American," "African-American," "Asian-American" and other hyphenated American terms. He said these titles should be celebrated because they show people "a unique quality of this great nation."

Minh Duc Thi Sheridan, the keynote speaker, echoed the celebration's theme through her story of the challenges she and her family had to endure on their journey to America from South Vietnam.

Sheridan and her family boarded a ship in Saigon's har-

bor on April 29, 1975, to escape attacks from communists from the north during the fall of Saigon. Sheridan was only 12 years old at the time and Duom Dang, her mother, was six months pregnant with her brother.

While Sheridan and her family were on the ship, it "ran aground in the middle of the harbor." Then they transferred to another naval ship where they spent 10 days before reaching the Philippines.

"We had very little food and water and all we could hear was the constant moaning of grieving parents and sick children," Sheridan said. "At that time the ship seemed like the saddest place on earth."

Some of the people on the ship had lost their family or friends but all Sheridan and her family had lost was their home.

The passengers were also planning for the future,

Sheridan said. Questions ran through their minds on whether their families would stay together or would they have to go their separate ways when reaching America.

"Would they have hot sauce in rescue camps?" was another question they had, Sheridan said.

Sheridan said the passengers also wondered "would there be freedom for all and a nation to call our own?"

After spending three months on the ship and traveling to the Philippines, Guam and Hawaii, the ship finally arrived in Fort Chafee, Ark. With the help of a family friend and comrade, Col. Gerry Krueger, they settled in Edgewood, Md., in August of 1975.

Sheridan graduated from Edgewood Senior High School in 1981 and then attended the

See HERITAGE, page 7



Master Yoon Ho Choi performs an "Energy Dance" during the Asian Pacific American celebration May 25.